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# Transport and the Economic Integration of South America, by Robert T. Brown

Samuel B. Richmond

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## BOOK REVIEWS

TRANSPORT AND THE ECONOMIC INTEGRATION OF SOUTH AMERICA,  
by Robert T. Brown. The Brookings Institution, Washington, D.C.,  
1966, pp. 288. \$6.00.

Some form of economic integration in South America is generally regarded by dispassionate observers and scholars as a desirable—and important—potential contributor to that continent's effort at increasing the per capita income of its inhabitants. Clearly, the reasoning is that the needed economic growth depends upon expansion of markets to permit the development of mass production and its attendant efficiencies. This, in turn, requires the expansion of exports, and the first logical place to seek expanded export markets is among one's neighbors. Robert T. Brown, in this well-conceived and carefully constructed volume, examines the role and importance of transportation in this process. He examines the needs, the possibilities, the barriers, and the potentially fruitful policies.

In approaching his task, the author substitutes "practical regional boundaries" for the present political boundaries and, on this basis, divides the South American continent into nine "regions," which he sees as natural geographical divisions. Some of these regions consist only of a part of one country, while others include all or part of several countries.

Since 1948, intra-South American trade has stagnated, and its traditionally small importance in the totality of South American international trade has become even smaller. For example, in 1962, the exports of the South American countries to one another represented only 7.5 percent of their total exports, and their imports from other South American countries constituted only 10.3 percent of their total imports. These quantities in 1948 were 9.9 percent and 13.0 percent, respectively, reflecting the fact that the volume of intra-South American trade was practically unchanged in this period, while the volume of total international trade of the South American countries increased.

The author finds that the concept of *access* is important in understanding the patterns of intra-South American trade, and that where access is relatively easy, trade tends to be more intense. For this reason, trade is primarily between adjoining countries and in primary products. From this observation, he hypothesizes that, if access could be improved through improved transport, commerce would be likely to increase. However, he emphasizes that the matter is not quite so simple as it may seem in that there are limitations to the extent to which this is true. Among these limitations are, first, the almost complete current dependence on ocean and, to some extent, river shipping for inter-country trade, and, second, the natural patterns of resource endowment.

After describing the location patterns of population and resources, and after considering, in turn, the current practices and future potential for the various modes of transport, the author concludes that, in addition to improvements in ocean transportation, further extensive development of river transportation could make a substantial contribution to economic integration. Though he foresees considerable future development in air transport, he believes it is highway transportation which must provide the major means for future improved access, since the railroads will now not be massively extended. Therefore, he concludes that the single best way to accomplish this purpose of improving the economic access among South American countries is via the Pan American Highway System.

Mr. Brown is to be congratulated on having concisely and purposefully inquired into the nature of the transportation policies and programs which show promise of being able to improve the South American transport network, and thereby contribute to a common market approach to economic progress.

*Samuel B. Richmond\**

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\* Professor, Graduate School of Business, Columbia University.